Women Confront the U.S. War Machine!

Women Against Imperialism
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652-4401 x656

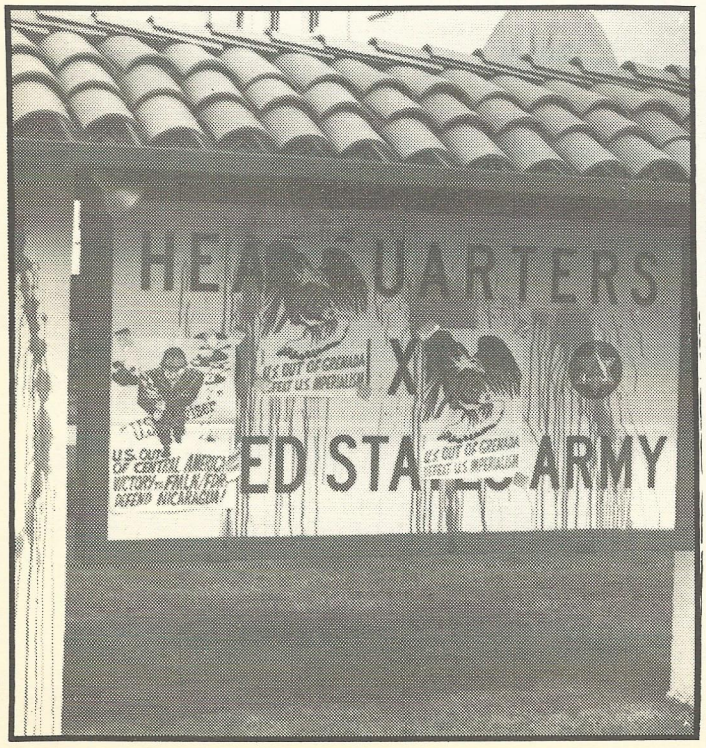
"Built on blood, built on war, we know what this place is for!" Between 150 and 200 women shouted this chant at an International Women's Day demonstration at the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco. On International Women's Day we had decided to confront U.S. militarism at its heart. We intended to reaffirm our support of the peoples of the Caribbean, Central America, the Middle East, of colonized Third World people inside the United States. We see these people not as objects of pity, but as leading forces in transforming the world. As women we wanted to honor our sisters all over the world who are resisting this system and releasing the power of women. In this article we want to share some of what we learned in the course of working on the demonstration.

As we planned the demonstration, our determination grew stronger as each day passed. The newspapers reported 2,000 more U.S. troops steaming toward Honduras to join the 5,000 troops already there. We knew that the U.S. has turned Honduras into a giant military base for large-scale war against Nicaragua and the FMLN -- complete with fighter-bomber airstrips, military highways, and

International Women's Da

fully-staffed military hospitals with no patients--yet! The evening news brought endless pictures of shelling around Beirut, and we got word of the Palestinian women prisoners' strike in the concentration camp of Neve Tertza. The Klan and Nazis held a national meeting to burn crosses in L.A., and the Administration continued to crow about a "recovery" buoyed up by genocidal cutbacks in Black and Third World communities. Reagan announced his intention to outlaw abortion during his second term. Our anger was fueled.

On the morning of March 10, we held a mobilizing meeting and then 75 women and children filtered onto the base from different entrances. Meanwhile, one hundred other women set up a picket line at the Presidio's main entrance, forcing the MPs to lock the gate. In front of the Sixth Army Headquarters, a group of women launched the demonstration by taking down the American flag that had been flying high above the base. Demonstrators promptly began to pour blood on the headquarters doors, on signs, on tanks and cannons. We carried beautiful portraits of women freedom fighters like the FSLN's Luisa Amanda Espinosa, FMLN Comandante Ana Maria, Puerto Rican POW Haydee Torres, and white anti-imperialist Judy Clark. Other women carried huge CIA death masks and puppets representing U.S. soldiers, the declaration WANTED FOR WAR CRIMES painted across their chests. The deathly peace of the main parade ground was broken with our shouts: "WE'RE ANGRY WOMEN AND WE'RE HERE TO SAY, DOWN WITH THE ARMY AND THE CIA!" We had come not to dissent, to ask the government to listen to us. Instead we had come as women in a spirit of resistance, determined to begin to obstruct the U.S. war machine through our own action and power.

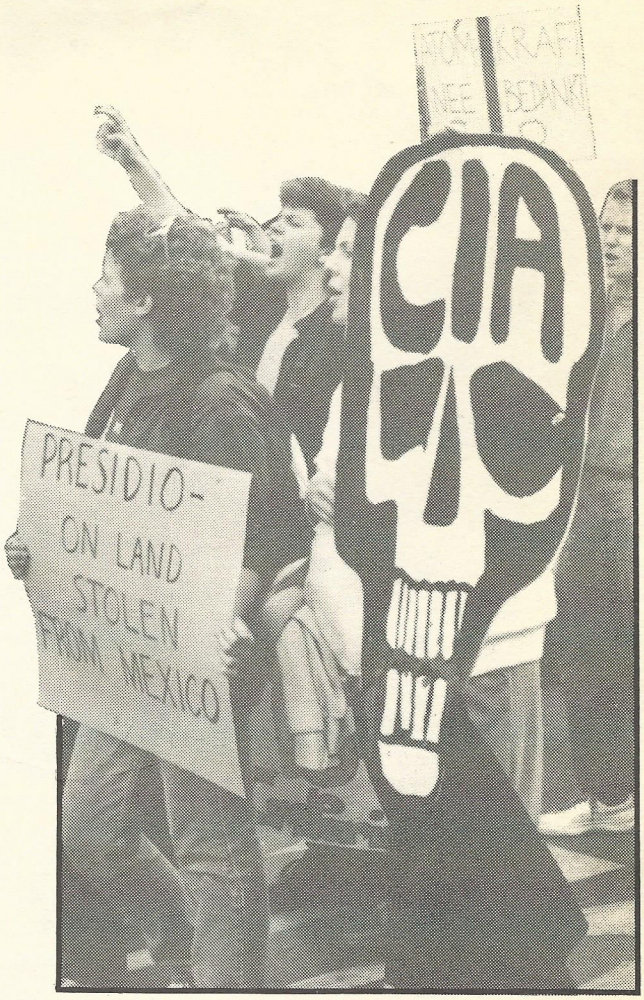


Within sixty seconds of the beginning of the picket, the MPs loudspeakers crackled with the sounds of an order to disperse. Even their threats conveyed their chauvinism toward women: "Ladies, ladies, you have to leave now!" Within moments the provost marshall was threatening a mass arrest, as a score of riot-clad MPs with shotguns and nightsticks scrambled to gain a defensive position in front of the headquarters. The sight of so many MPs was intimidating, but we were able to draw on our collective strength. We remembered what Magda Enriquez, a leader of the Nicaraguan Women's Association, had said in her speech just a few days before: "We women learned to overcome our fear. It is only natural to be afraid when confronted with the brutality of the regime. But the real issue is how do we take on our fear and turn it into action." Of course our situation was much less risky than the situation of Nicaraguan women, but Magda's spirit gave us a lot of strength: the chants went up louder, fists shot into the air, fingers pointed in the faces of the MPs. The Red

y — Women in Resistance

Dragons Children's contingent pulled itself more tightly together, and several women marched a huge FSLN flag through the MPs to the entrance of the Sixth Army Headquarters.

The demonstration had taken the initiative, and we continued toward the Army Museum to target an exhibit glorifying "The American Woman at War." By this time the MPs were trotting along behind us issuing orders to the empty air: "Ladies, ladies, you can't go in the streets!" Through the streets we marched to Letterman Army Hospital, the site of germ warfare research. As one of the women began to address the crowd, two MPs pushed her up against a police car, handcuffed her and put her under arrest. The entire demonstration surrounded the MPs, shouting "Who's the real terrorist? The U.S. Army!", while the military police car was doused with blood. The march continued toward its goal, the main entrance of the Presidio, where the two demonstrations merged.



To us International Women's Day was significant because it was one step down the long road that we need to take. We are committed to building an anti-imperialist women's movement that can strongly confront U.S. militarism and U.S. imperialism itself. This system is very strong, but we believe we can have an impact. The war machine is ever-present -- ROTC on every campus, recruiting stations in our neighborhoods, war research in every city and university. The war machine is everywhere, but so are we. In the last few months we've seen that the movement can drive Jeanne Kirkpatrick off campus; we can make the Marines and the CIA cancel their recruiting days; in the '60s, 80% of all ROTC programs were closed

down. We as women have a lot of anger, and we can transform this anger into power when we struggle in solidarity with people all over the world. On International Women's Day we received a telegram from women demonstrating at Armagh Women's Prison in Ireland; we received greetings from West Germany and Nicaragua. We knew that 200 women in Chicago had demonstrated the day before, taking over a Marine Recruiting Station. We also saw how we as individuals were able to change and grow through collective work. We learned to do things we had never done before -- we spoke on the radio, wrote articles, silk-screened posters, developed photos, leafletted on the streets, led chants, and made plans and carried them through. We got a glimpse of the truth of this slogan from the Nicaraguan Women's Association: "In struggling for the new society, we create the new woman." We're acutely aware of the high price that the people of Central America are paying for their freedom, and we feel the urgency of building a women's resistance that can struggle harder here in the heart of imperialism. In this spirit, we urge you to get in touch with us so that together we can begin.

Despite a huge snowstorm, 200 women came out to demonstrate on International Women's Day in Chicago. The women marched to IBM, which sells computers to white supremacist South Africa; to Macy's, protesting the objectification of women; and to the Metropolitan Correctional Center, where three Puerto Rican POWs are being held. Five women were arrested after taking over a Marine Corps recruiting station.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

☐ Join women's Human Billboard action on Central America, as part of LAG's Tax Day, April 16. ☐ Join our phone tree to mobilize for demonstrations. ☐ Set up a video showing of Women in the Nicaraguan Revolution for your class, organization, or friends. ☐ Write a check to Women Against Imperialism or donate garage sale items now. ☐ Help out with our street theatre. CALL WOMEN AGAINST IMPERIALISM 652-4401 X656.

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____ PHONE (DAY) _____ (EVE) _____

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Make the struggle of the prisoners our own!

Women Against Imperialism presents this round-up of news about Prisoners of War (POWs) and political prisoners because we think that solidarity with the prisoners must become a central issue as we build an anti-imperialist women's movement. From Armagh to Alderson, the state uses prison to punish political people who have challenged its rule most strongly. The goal is to make our fear of methods of repression so great that we will no longer have the courage and determination that we need for the struggle. The existence of a growing number of women POWs and political prisoners reflects the fact that women are breaking out of their secondary roles and placing themselves on the front line of revolutionary struggle. These women are an example to us of how we must confront repression: with principles, determination, and political mobilization.

The NATO "democracies" like the U.S. and West Germany are using increasingly harsh forms of repression to try to extinguish the flame of resistance inside the imperialist countries, before it gets out of control. On April 10, five members and supporters of the Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional Puertoriqueña are going to prison for three years. Their crime? Refusing to inform on the Puerto Rican Independence movement to a Grand Jury directed by the FBI! Six additional Puerto Rican and white activists are resisting and will soon face imprisonment. We can deprive the government of its weapon of fear by struggling more offensively against political internment. We urge all women to mobilize for the April 10 demonstration at the San Francisco Federal Building, 4:30 p.m!

STRIP SEARCHES OF PUERTO RICAN P.O.W. LUCY RODRIGUES AND ANTI-IMPERIALIST POLITICAL PRISONER SYLVIA BARALDINI

These two women have been subjected to strip searches and barbaric "visual cavity checks." Silvia, who was convicted of conspiring to liberate Assata Shakur, writes this news: "I am in the hole again, for again refusing to spread my butt. Lucy and I both refused and because it was my second offense they put me in the hole. Lucy was given 50 hours extra duty which she refused, and then they put her in the hole. The prison has decided to turn this issue into a show of strength and have threatened us with forcible searches if need by by male physician assistants. As the unit manager so clearly stated to Lucy: 'You might consider yourself a Prisoner of War, but we do not." Write letters of support to the comrades: Ida Luz Rodriguez #88973-024, Silvia Baraldini, PO Box 1000, 150 Park Row, NY NY 10007.

ISOLATION AND PUNITIVE TRANSFERS FOR P.O.W.'S

In May, four Puerto Ricans are being brought to trial for "seditious conspiracy," as though it was treasonous to fight for Puerto Rico's independence. Some of the comrades are being held 23 hours a day in cages smaller than regulation dog kennels.

At this time the government is giving punitive transfers to many of the Puerto Rican, New Afrikan (Black) and white anti-imperialist prisoners, moving them thousands of miles from their friends, families, children and supporters. Guards appear suddenly in the middle of the night and carry the prisoners off to an unknown destination. Carlos Alberto Torres, for instance, was shipped to Alabama and forbidden to communicate in Spanish. (continued on back)

The state will never achieve its goal of demoralizing or breaking these brave freedom fighters. We must do our part to destroy the wall of isolation. Write WAI for a list of addresses, and begin corresponding with one of the prisoners. Donate new or used political books to the Real Dragon Project by calling WAI. You can send a SASE to us to receive the IWD messages of Alicia Rodriguez and Judy Clark. A good source of in-depth information is Libertad, National Committee to Free Puerto Rican POWs, 2520 N. Lincoln, Box 147, Chicago IL 60614.

PALESTINIAN WOMEN PRISONERS ON STRIKE

Since June 1983, 38 Palestinian women political prisoners have been on strike at Neve Tertza prison. The women refused to cook meals for the guards and raised the slogan: "Political prisoners are not slaves!" The prison threw the women into lock-up, gassed them, and denied visits, radios, books, and newspapers. Join the postcard campaign being organized by Israeli Women Against the Occupation and by Jewish Women for a Secular Middle East, P.O. Box 10555, Oakland, CA 94610.

EL SALVADORIAN WOMEN DEMAND: RELEASE CLAUDINA CALDERON!

Political activist Claudina Calderon was abducted by government troops in El Salvador along with her infant son, three other women, and three children. She was recently seen in a clandestine government prison, still alive despite constant torture. Write a letter of support to Claudina Calderon and send it c/o Reynaldo Lopez Nuila, Policia Nacional, San Salvador, El Salvador, C.A. (35¢ airmail postage). For more information, contact the National Campaign to Release Claudina Calderon, (415) 552-5015 or (415) 549-0541 X1157 (messages).

REPRESSION INTENSIFIES IN WEST GERMANY

Women Against Imperialist War in West Germany informs us that the government is intensifying pressure against prisoners from the guerilla movement (Red Army Fraktion), and from the anti-imperialist movement in general. Isolation torture has been stepped up by cutting off nearly all visits and mail--some prisoners' mail consists only of confiscation decrees from the Attorney General. A new law states that people who write the prisoners can be charged with being part of an "illegal information system," and one woman has been jailed under this law. A campaign has been launched to have all movement organizations send leaflets and greetings to the prisoners, and fight for them to get through.

The government has also attempted to commit several women prisoners to mental institutions, to make it appear that those who resist are crazy. These moves have all been stopped by public protest. Send a SASE to WAI for more information, and send support letters to Grussaktion Politische Gefangene, c/o GAL Bartlestr. 30, 2000 Hamburg 13, West Germany.

STRIP SEARCHES OF IRISH REPUBLICAN PRISONERS AT ARMAGH: SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY PROTEST

In Armagh Women's Prison, Irish freedom fighters have been forcibly strip searched, by being thrown to the ground and having guards sit on them while being searched. One woman had her sanitary napkin ripped off her, while another woman was blindfolded throughout. All received severe bruising and other injuries. This year Irish and British women have carried on the tradition of going to the prison gates for International Women's Day, in solidarity with the prisoners and the Irish national liberation struggle. As part of developing an internationalist women's movement, WAI exchanged solidarity statements with the Armagh demonstrators. For more information, write to the San Francisco H Block/Armagh Committee, 827 14th St., San Francisco, CA 94114.

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